

*Field Naturalists
Club of Ballarat*
Incorporated

OCTOBER 1993

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting Oct 1 Hakeas - Ms H Blackney

Meeting Nov 5 Stella Bedgood Memorial Lecture
St Cuthbert's Hall, Elliot St.
Mr I Woodland - Filming Nature in
other Lands

Excursion Oct 3 Brisbane Ranges - L Fink and F Harrap

Excursion NOV 7 Fell's Gully - G Binns



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Editor: Mr. A. Dyson 413948

Meetings as specified are held
at the School of Mines and
Industries, Lydiard Street Sth,
Art Building, commencing at 7.30
p.m. EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED,
COMMENCE FROM BOOK CITY, cnr
STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS, BALLARAT
at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTING:
OR at 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY.

Diary Dates

15-17 October: WVFNCA Campout, Mt Arapiles. Details from Secretary.

27 October: Committee Meeting, 7.30pm at Gregurke's, 1 John Street, Wendouree.

Club Campout at Stuart Mill

The Bishop James Memorial Camp Site at Stuart Mill is the venue for Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat 1994 campout. The camp dates are 26th-28th November.

Facilities at the camp include Hall, Dining Room, Kitchen, Bunkhouses, Toilet block and Laundry. The kitchen is fully equipped with stoves, refrigerators, cutlery and crockery. Campers only have to provide their food for the weekend.

The bunkhouses are divided into 2, 4 and 6 bed bunkrooms. Mattresses, pillows and blankets are supplied. Please bring your own pillow case, sheets or sleeping bag.

An interesting program for the weekend is being planned. St Arnaud FNC members will help to provide local knowledge. A good attendance of Field Naturalists will ensure a successful weekend.

Costs for the camp are Adults \$10.00 per day, Students \$7.00 per day.

Field Reports: September Meeting

Pat Murphy: 53 Anchor plants are growing well at Lal Lal. They have grown higher than the guards.

Wayne Walker: Owl pellet containing rabbit fur and several teeth found under tall Stingybark tree at Navigators. Possibly from Powerful Owl.

Ken Hammond: During a recent rainy afternoon a male Brown Goshawk perched on a horizontal limb of a wattle tree in Wendouree. The bird remained for 2 hours preening itself.

BOX/IRONBARK FORESTS OF VICTORIA

Barry Traill

Barry is completing post-graduate research in Zoology at Monash University specialising in small mammals of the box/ironbark forests.

The original box/ironbark forests tended to occupy the north-western slopes of the Great Divide between Stawell in Victoria and Toowoomba in Queensland. These forests have been depleted and fragmented in the last 150 years and only 15% of the original area remains.

Few individual trees now exceed 200 years in age, the rest is regrowth of up to 60 years. In Victoria the habitat is scattered through the North-Central area, including Paddy's Ranges and near Chiltern in the North-East. Typical occurrence has red ironbark on the dry ridges with red gum and grey box in the wetter gullies.

The squirrel glider is commonly found in the red ironbark (*E. Sideroxylon*) of Chiltern forest but not in the subspecies (*E. Tricarpa*) of Rushworth forest, this being a species bearing no nectar. The sugar glider commonly occurs in all box/ironbark. These gliders have selected feeding trees where they make incisions in the bark.

A pair of tuans need up to 60 hectares of territory compared with gliders requiring only one hectare, thus tuans are very susceptible to habitat destruction. Tuans will use artificial nesting boxes and this provides a convenient method for tracking the population.

The decline in the box/ironbark habitat is also endangering the regent, blue-faced, and yellow-tufted honeyeaters and powerful owl - all need mature trees for nesting hollows, nectar and seeds. As soon as a population falls below a certain critical number, one bad season can cause extinction.

In the large remaining blocks of box/ironbark cutting for railway sleepers and firewood is still practiced and approximately 200 hectares per year is being lost to renewed gold mining.

VNPA and CCV are actively campaigning for reservation of some box/ironbark in the form of a National Park.

Inverleigh Common - Sunday 5th Sept 1993

We drove South in sunny weather to our rendez-vous at Teesdale noting the wattles in bloom and the bird life on the way. Wood duck, mainly in pairs, were common on or near to farm dams, particularly between Buninyong and Mount Mercer. The interest then became raptors on the volcanic soil country to Shelford. Several Australian (Nankeen) Kestrels were hunting the roadside reserves as were a pair of Black-shouldered Kites and two or three Brown Falcons. Pippits were plentiful along this stretch.

Twenty-one souls - members, babies and friends - met our leaders for the day, Grant Baverstock and Lawrie Conole who are members of the Geelong Fields Naturlists and experts on Inverleigh Common. We commenced at the Northern end of the common taking a walk around a block dominated by ribbony gum (E.viminalis) and hedge wattle (A.paradoxa) understory well in bloom. There was a dam that was holding water for the first time in ten years. A group of iron-barks were just begining to flower, and already, there were signs of parrot predation. There was also a good patch of white mint bush (Prostanthera nivea) which was budding up nicely. Ants were plentiful and in fair variety. There was ample evidence of echidnas.

The second site had red gum, hedge wattle and black wattle (A.mearnsii) as the conspicuous elements. Here, also, was a dam, stone work and olive trees, the remnants of some settler's dream. This area yielded more birds, frogs, including a nicely marked tree frog, midge orchids, a scilla and promise of more flowers in the near future. Probably, the highlight in this area was a koala discovered in a black wattle about 1 metre above ground. The animal, blind in one eye but otherwise apparently healthy, descended to walk nonchantly through the cluster of spectators and then climb a nearby tree.

The site finally visited was remarkable for many large banksias (B.marginata), one ancient specimen had a trunk about 1 metre in diameter. Although much gnarled and "pruned" this plant was still producing stout, lofty shoots.

Within this sector a particularly tall specimen of light-wood (Acacia implexa) was shown to us. Three species of greenhoods were found in close proximity, probably within 3 square metres.

Inverleigh Common, a State flora reserve, presents a range of habitats that would be well worth visiting at intervals through the year. We thank Lawrie Conole, Grant Baverstock and Kieran Baverstock for introducing us to their special study area.

The plant list was recorded by Pat Murphy and the bird list by Ken Hammond.

KMD.

Inverleigh Common: Birds Seen 5 Sept 1993

Black duck	Willie wagtail
Brown falcon	Golden whistler
Common bronze-wing	Grey shrike-thrush
Galah	Spotted pardalote
Eastern rosella	Striated Pardalote
Kookaburra	Yellow-faced honeyeater
Welcome swallow	White-plumed honeyeater
Tree martin	Diamond firetail
Black-faced cuckoo-shrike	Dusky wood swallow
Superb blue wren	Australian magpie
Yellow-rumped thornbill	

K.H.

INVERLEIGH FLORA RESERVE

Acacia implexa	Lightwood
" mearnsii	Late Black Wattle
" paradoxa	Hedge Wattle
" pycnantha	Golden Wattle
Acaena novae-zelandiae	Bidgee Widgee
Acianthus caudatus	Mayfly Orchid
" exsertus	Gnat Orchid
Allocasuarina littoralis	Black She-oak
Astroloma humifusum	Cranberry Heath

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INVERLEIGH FLORA RESERVE (cont...)

<i>Banksia marginata</i>	Silver Banksia
<i>Bossiaea prostrata</i>	Creeping Bossiaea
* <i>Briza maxima</i>	Large Quaking Grass
<i>Brunonia australis</i>	Blue Pincushion
<i>Chamaescilla corymbosa</i>	Blue Squill
<i>Cheilanthes</i> sp.	
<i>Chrysocephalum apiculatum</i>	Common Everlasting
<i>Clematis microphylla</i>	Small-leaved Clematis
<i>Dianella revoluta</i>	Black-anther Flax-lily
<i>Dichondra repens</i>	Kidney-weed
<i>Dillwynia glaberrima</i>	Smooth Parrot-pea
<i>Diuris lanceolata</i>	Golden Moths
" <i>sulphurea</i>	Tiger Orchid
<i>Drosera planchonii</i>	Climbing Sundew
" <i>pygmaea</i>	Tiny Sundew
<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	River Red Gum
" <i>sideroxylon</i>	Red Ironbark
" <i>viminalis</i>	Manna Gum
<i>Exocarpos cupressiformis</i>	Cherry Ballart
<i>Geranium</i> sp.	
<i>Hibbertia stricta</i>	Erect Guinea Flower
<i>Hydrocotyle laxiflora</i>	Stinking Pennywort
<i>Hypericum gramineum</i>	Small St.John's-wort
<i>Hypoxis hygrometrica</i>	Golden Weather-glass
<i>Kennedia prostrata</i>	Running Postman
<i>Lepidosperma congestum</i>	Clustered Sword Sedge
" <i>lineare</i>	Little Sword Sedge
" <i>semiteres</i>	Wire Rapier Sedge
<i>Oxalis perennans</i>	Yellow Wood Sorrel
<i>Pimelea</i> sp.	
* <i>Pinus radiata</i>	Monterey Pine
<i>Platylobium obtusangulum</i>	Common Flt-pea
<i>Prostanthera nivea</i>	Snowy Mint Bush
<i>Pterostylis nana</i>	Dwarf Greenhood
" <i>nutans</i>	Nodding Greenhood
" <i>pedunculata</i>	Maroonhood
<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass
<i>Thysanotus patersonii</i>	Twining Fringe-lily
<i>Viola hederacea</i>	Ivy-leaf Violet
<i>Wahlenbergia</i> sp.	
<i>Wurmbea dioica</i>	Early Nancy

LORDS OF ANTARCTICA (continued)

The main reason for the trip was to see the Emperor Penguins. These are the largest penguins and they breed on the ice shelves and fast ice (ice attached to the coast) in coastal Antarctica. The egg is incubated on the feet in mid-winter darkness, protected and warmed by an overhanging flap. The chick grows rapidly and departs for open sea and pack ice in early summer when the fast ice has broken up.

Emperors stand 1 metre high and weigh 20-40Kg. About 2 dozen Emperor colonies are known and we saw 3 of them.

Many seek their partner of the previous year. With so many calling birds it is a miracle they ever find their partner. They bow and call strutting about solemnly or standing close and flashing their orange head patches from side to side - it a leisurely and lordly affair unlike other penguins. After the egg is laid, usually in June the male takes the egg and settles back on his heels for 2 months. The female leaves and heads North to open sea which could be 100Km away. The male has starved for 2 months during courtship and then has a further 2 months without food until the female returns. He relies on fat which is stored in the abdomen. Temperatures can drop to as low as -40°C and members of the colony huddle together in a huge milling, sleepy mass. The female returns at the time of egg hatching and the male goes to sea for 3-4 weeks. For 7-8 weeks the chick sits on the feet of the adult until they can stand on their own. By late October the chicks receive 1/3 of their weight in food every 2-3 days. The chicks are clothed in grey down in contrast to the King Penguin chicks which are brown.

The Emperors seem awkward when walking, their preferred method of locomotion is tobogganning.

Emperors can dive to 265m and stay under water for 9 minutes.

Kloa Point was the site of our first sighting of these magnificent birds. The area was crowded with icebergs caught in the fast ice. The helicopter flight of 15 minutes took us to about 1Km of the rookery. The birds were scattered, some adults with chicks begging for food.

Mostly the chicks were in groups of their own and there was much activity with the adults coming and going. These Emperors certainly choose magnificent real estate sites with towering icebergs dwarfing the penguins and us.

That night I watched the sun until 12,30pm and realised that the 24 hours of daylight were with us. We were just inside the Antarctic Circle and it was 8th December 1992. **HB.**

Australian native Mammals

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Sugar Glider (Petaurus breviceps)

Intermediate in size between the tiny feather-tail and Greater Glider, it is found around the coast from N.W. W.A. around the eastern coast to S.A. Tas. New Guinea, West Irian and some islands

It is very common in areas where there are plenty of hollows and abundant food, gum from wattles and sap from certain eucalypts invertebrates and invertebrates exudates. The Sugar Glider tolerates a wider range of temperatures and in extreme cold huddles together with others in its social group which is up to seven adults and their young. In this area breeding begins in August where two young is the norm. These remain in the pouch for 70 days then in the nest for a further 30 days after which the young forage for themselves, usually accompanied by their mother.

They have a range of calls from a shrill yapping that is a warning to others of enemies. There is a sharp threatening scream when fighting and a gurgling chatter if disturbed in their nests.

Populations appear to be stable particularly where there is an open forest with dense patches of acacia, they were probably more widespread before European Settlement. Sugar Gliders often thrive in patches of trees on farmland and along roadsides.

Its status is common around Ballarat and is often brought to houses by cats. There are seven subspecies.

It is not a timid animal by any means and will protect itself and audaciously defend itself against bigger possums and even Tuans.

Its enemies are cats powerful owls kookaburras and goannas.

Elfin